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In fine it may be argued that the seclusion, together with the purificatory rites at the end of it, aim (the one in a positive manner, the other in a negative or precautionary manner) at the physical perfection of the initiate.

I have never met with any native rationale for the *suna qua* ceremonial observance; but a very similar process is sometimes used in the treatment of sickness; and as the argument is in this case fairly clear it may throw some light upon the rite in general. A man who has for some time been suffering from headache and general pains submits himself to treatment called *jura*.[1] Various leaves (*Tebo, Hamanya, Bakimo, Haiva, Hamburi, Kore, Urga*, are the names of some of them—but there are many recipes for *jura*) are scraped and pounded in a wooden dish with coco-nut oil. The patient squats over it covering himself with a pandanus mat, a hot stone is slipped into the dish, and he sits in a cloud of steam. The only remarkable feature about the leaves used is that they all possess a more or less strong smell (*mune*), that of the *tebo* being in European nostrils nothing short of abominable.

Now it is a very common Orokaiva theory that sickness may be due to the immanence of the spirits of the dead in the patient, and I have been assured on more than one occasion that they may be driven out by noisome medicines, simply, it is said, because they cannot endure the smell. The object of the *jura* fumigation, therefore, seems to be to drive out the malignant spirits; and (although I have not noted whether it possessed any strong smell) the ceremonial *suna* may possibly be used with the same idea. The novices during their true initiation in the *embabi* ceremony, and during their subsequent seclusion and association with the flutes and bull-roarer, have been in intimate association with the spirits of the dead—*sovai, embabi*, or *siango*. The fact that there is a vast deal of sham in the whole cycle of ceremonies does not altogether preclude a belief that the *embabi* are really present. As we have observed, make-believe and true

[1] See p. 297. The word is sometimes given to the ceremonial rite which I have called *suna* throughout, but I have not heard the word *suna* given to the 'medical' process.

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It is finally wrapped up with some of the fat and entrails and buried. In other cases it is hung up in the garden of the deceased and there left to rot in the sun and rain. This garden has been allowed to fall to rack and ruin since his death: none of its products have been eaten, though the young taro shoots may be transplanted to a new plot. In the Wasida dialect the word *kisa* was applied to such a garden. It appears that in this case the neglect of the garden was less a self-denying tabu than due to an actual fear of evil consequences—such as sore eyes, tooth decay, skinniness—if its products were eaten. And it is noteworthy that such effects would be felt only by the immediate relatives of the dead. It was possible, in fact, to make an exchange of gardens, so that the bereaved relatives would not be left without resources, the *kisa* garden being passed over to one who would take no harm from it, and another being given in exchange to the relatives of the dead. The evil potency of the *kisa* garden is apparently attributed to the malignant spirits of the dead—an explanation for which I have the direct testimony of one informant, although in many other cases it remained inexplicit. It is in keeping with the belief (which is a basis for a system of divination, cf. p. 281) that the dead revisit or haunt their gardens, and in general with the fear which the Orokaiva feels for his deceased relatives *qua sovai*. Among the various mourning tabus which have come to my notice, however, this, viz. the forbidding of the garden to the relatives of the deceased, was the only instance in which the motive was apparently one of fear. All the others were rather manifestations of sorrow.

The Naterari, or Tabu Post

The fourth major mortuary ceremony is a dance, which among the Aiga and Binandele is accompanied by a dramatic performance. The fifth is the ritual disposal of certain materials used in the fourth ceremony. Now I do not believe that the dance and drama are purely and wholly a mortuary ceremony, but that they are at least partly so appears from the facts that the dead are called upon to witness the proceedings, and that, when the proceedings are over, certain

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In short, we see that *asisi* is a loose word covering a variety of conceptions, and we must seek a correspondingly wide definition. 114

The Asisi as Spiritual Substitute

Now, for the time being, we may dismiss the idea of an *asisi* or 'spirit', and view certain native beliefs apart from any ulterior, i.e. spiritual, explanation. It would, then, seem as if the native believed that persons and things could on occasion act, exist, or be present to consciousness in a manner independently of their concrete selves. To take the last of the above-mentioned examples, for instance, it would seem that in native belief the taro plant could influence the human being although he had no contact whatever with the actual vegetable.

For this proposition in general there is a mass of evidence —dream appearances, trance journeys, spirit possession, the action of charms and medicines, &c., all of which are familiar to anthropology. A few concrete examples from the Orokaiva, however, may be added. A man has eaten sugar-cane, which is for some reason unwholesome or harmful. So long as the wind does not blow he is comfortable, but when it rises and sways the sugar-cane in the garden it sets up a synchronous disturbance in the victim's stomach and makes him ill. Again a man attributes his cold in the nose to the numerous unripe bread-fruit. Why? According to his own explanation they are as yet of a watery consistency, and so by their mere presence make him rheumy, inclined to spit and snivel. A youth, having offered a cigarette to his sweetheart, pokes the butt into a nest of ants. The ants bite the cigarette, and the girl is stimulated into loving him. A woman has eaten of a pig whose flesh is for some reason harmful. Her child falls ill and is supposed to have imbibed the cause of its sickness together with its mother's milk. Two women live in parts of the same house. One of them has eaten carpet-snake, cooking it in a pot over the fire. Subsequently the other woman cooks some taro in the ashes of the same fire and gives them to her husband. He falls ill and ascribes his sickness to the unwholesome carpet-snake. 114 153

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in a dream and bequeathed him some instructions or a tangible 'medicine'. Sometimes the healer is in like manner indebted for his gift to a benevolent *sovai*; or the hunting magician may receive from a *sovai* the intelligence that a pig is waiting to be caught.

But apart from the favours which the *sovai* are supposed to bestow on specialists, we find that every gardener and hunter feels that the dead may send him success. It is true that the negative side of this proposition is more often in evidence, i.e. he is more prone to attribute failure to the displeasure of the *sovai* than success to their favour, but there is, nevertheless, the belief that they are able to make the gardens flourish and to drive the pigs into the pig-nets, and this is proved by the custom of adjuring the *sovai* to do so in the farewell address at the grave.

Even in the legends, where the *sovai* usually plays a very villainous part, we occasionally meet with one that is grateful or well disposed to the living. There is, for example, the case of the grateful warrior whose younger brother cared for his children after he had been killed, and who subsequently, in the form of a bird, warned this younger brother of an approaching raid. Nor did his gratitude stop at this, for abandoning his bird-shape he assumed that of a warrior, and held a large number of raiders at bay while his younger brother ran for help.

But such benevolent conduct on the part of the *sovai* is to say the least unusual, and it must be confessed that on the whole the Orokaiva regards his relatives and friends after their death as enemies. Any failure of the crops may be attributed to them; they may baffle the hunters; they may send the pigs to break through the fences and despoil the gardens. Sickness is perhaps ascribed more often to the malevolence of *sovai* than to any other cause. It is sometimes believed that the *sovai* enter the body in immaterial form, and sometimes that they may cause disease by a mere evil influence, e.g. by touching food. If they are eaten in their animal form sickness invariably follows. We have seen that they have more direct ways of wreaking their ill feelings, and in the guise of monsters they pursue, capture,

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XVII

MEDICINE AND MAGIC

812 WE have seen that in the easy-going philosophy of the Orokaiva the course of nature is largely taken for granted. All the things and processes of the world exist or happen *per se*; they are not under any omnipotent control nor do they submit to continual regulation by any personal powers. But we have also seen that they may be *influenced* for good or evil by the *sovai*, i.e. those beings who survive death.

Now it appears that the *sovai* are not the only agencies by which nature may be mysteriously influenced in one direction or the other. There is in Orokaiva philosophy a second kind of agency, equally occult, by which the normal happenings of nature may be interfered with: this is the power of magic and sorcery. Magic and sorcery have been dealt with at length in another report,[1] so that it is not my purpose here to describe their general methods, much less to elaborate the theory which was attempted in that essay. The present chapter will deal with a single subject—fairly well defined—that of diseases, their putative causes and treatment, and it will touch upon the magical aspect of these treatments only in passing.

Causes of Disease

753 The native, while believing that the *sovai* and the living magician or sorcerer can influence nature both for good and evil, is yet more impressed by misfortune than by ordinary success, so that it is especially in the face of calamity or failure that his thoughts turn to occult explanations. Since no misfortune, perhaps, impresses him so frequently or forcibly as that of sickness or disease, we shall not be surprised to find the responsibility for this, which seems like an interference with the normal course of nature, fixed sometimes upon the *sovai* and sometimes upon the sorcerer.

[1] *Orokaiva Magic.*

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Native ideas on the subject of disease, therefore, while possessing an intrinsic interest and, indeed, revealing a certain amount of straightforward good sense, will also serve to illustrate the attitude toward both the spirits of the dead and the power of living magic; and, further, they will incidentally exemplify the actual procedure of magic.

Classification.

As the result of a good deal of questioning on this subject I feel justified in reducing diseases, according to their putative causes, to the following classification: (1) *Casual Diseases*: the result, e.g., of accident, of weather conditions, of over-exertion, &c., or of chance contact with some harmful substance or thing which often appears in one form or another to enter the body. All these afflictions, which I have lumped together under the not wholly satisfactory expression Casual Diseases, are distinguished from the two classes which follow in that they are not due to any personal agency, but to causes which the native regards as natural. They are misfortunes, not inflictions. (2) *Sovai Diseases*: i.e. those caused by the attack of the *sovai*, and in many instances by its immanence in the body. (3) *Sorcery Diseases*: i.e. those which are brought about by black magic.

It is necessary to add that the most prevalent native conception of disease is that of an intrusive element. One cannot say that this is invariable. It does not appear to cover all natural diseases nor all *sovai* diseases, and, as far as I am aware, it does not apply to any sorcery diseases; but it is, nevertheless, the usual native theory, and will be found to account for a large number of treatments. The word for sickness is *ambu*. I dare not attempt to define its applications, but, since sickness as an intrusive element takes so many varying forms in native imagination, some of them apparently quite immaterial, one will not be far wrong in saying that *ambu* may be regarded, like 'sickness', as an abstraction. The native will say that the *ambu* enters the body, leaves it, passes from one to another, &c., without having any set idea that it possesses form or consistency of any sort.

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753 It is not to be supposed that a native will always be able to set down his ideas of disease and its causes under logical headings, but I have often enough found the above three-fold classification implied and sometimes expressed. One man, for instance, who practised as a healer or expeller of diseases, classified the causes as follows: (1) heat, strain, cold, and the like, where a man is said to sicken '*teho*', i.e. 'by himself' or 'for nothing'; (2) the entry of injurious substances; (3) the attack of *sovai*; and (4) the use of *inja*, i.e. the sorcerer's specific. His first two divisions will, in the main, coincide with our first class, viz. casual diseases.

Casual Diseases.

[164] Orokaiva natives, like others in the Territory, probably suffer to some considerable extent from malaria. They are certainly afflicted by headaches and attacks of fever. When the colder winds from the south-east, called *pishi*, spring up, they learn to expect these attacks. They call them *ambu isapo*, or 'small sickness', and usually regard them as natural occurrences with no ulterior causes, such as that of a visitation from the *sovai*, or the malice of a sorcerer. So again we find a doctor attributing a man's sickness to a drenching from the rain; or in another case to working in his garden through the hottest part of the day; in another to over-exerting himself by carrying two small pigs tied to a pole across his shoulder. Such straightforward ailments, besides being called *ambu isapo*, 'small sicknesses', are sometimes spoken of as *memei*, which means 'ache' or 'pain'; and in the generality of cases they are accepted without question as natural phenomena, the transient ills to which all flesh is heir.

753 755 It is interesting to note that in the last instance quoted a doctor discovered (by means of a method of extraction to be described presently) several fragments of a pig's larger intestine in the patient's body. This affords an example of the very common view which has been referred to already, viz. that disease or sickness is an intrusive element. It is true that the doctor in question subsequently discovered a variety of other tell-tale fragments and offered a number of

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diagnoses of what must have been a very complicated disease; but, in so far as the disease was due to the strain of carrying the pigs it was *present in* the man's body, evidenced by the pig's intestine. On one occasion my cook-boy, who suffered from headaches, took it upon himself to consult a *bara* woman, i.e. one who practises extraction. She succeeded in removing from his forehead a small piece of trade twist: his complaint had been due to over-smoking. The same woman treated a man with a pain in his foot. It appeared that in fording a stream he had struck his foot against a boulder, and the *bara* woman contrived to extract a small pebble from his instep. This, the man himself told me, must have got into his foot as he crossed the stream. It will be seen presently that there is some doubt whether such material objects are always believed to be actually present in the patient's body. But in the cases where they are not believed to be so present, they are at least allowed to stand in imagination for the sickness, and are thus in keeping with the idea of the sickness as a foreign presence which has intruded itself into the body.

This assimilation or absorption of a sickness mostly comes about by eating, and the diagnosis is, of course, retrospective. A man with a pain in any part of his body—though, we may suppose, usually in the region of his stomach—remembers what he ate, and not unnaturally makes it bear the blame. Any kind of food—bananas, sugar-cane, e.g.—may be intrinsically bad, and the victim still unable to explain why it should be so. Very often, as we shall see, its injurious properties are due to the presence of or contamination by a *sovai*, but this is not invariable. I have known a man profess to abstain from eating snake because he could not bear the thought of the reptile writhing in his stomach, and another who would not eat flying-fox for fear of the internal flapping and fluttering.

All these are examples of casual diseases. They are acquired in the course of daily experience, and they are acquired directly, i.e. not through any personal agency such as that of *sovai* or sorcerer. It seems that we must place in the same category those diseases which were specially

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153 treated by the Taro men. According to the doctrines of their cult certain species of the taro plant were regarded as *koropa*, or 'strong'. To eat them caused illness, and this illness was supposedly due to the presence in the victim's body of the *asisi* of the taro. Nor was it only by eating that the taro *asisi* could be absorbed. If, for example, a man pulled taro from the gardens without first having consulted the *ba-embo*, or Taro man, then the *asisi* of the aggrieved plant would enter into the offender and make him sick. It was then the opportunity of the *ba-embo* in his capacity of doctor to entice the *asisi* back from the patient's body, and so put an end to his sickness.

Sovai Diseases.

153 115 It will be remembered that among the great majority of the followers of the Taro Cult it was toward the spirit of the dead rather than the spirits of the actual taro plant that all ritual was directed; and accordingly we find that sickness is with them very commonly attributed to the *sovai*. In this the Taro Cult (i.e. the popular form of it) was wholly in keeping with former belief. No agency is more readily made responsible for human illness than are the *sovai*, who are so often regarded as dangerous and spiteful. Remarkable as it may seem, it is especially the *sovai* of close relatives who are blamed for sickness, and they are sometimes thought to enter the bodies of their victims at the actual funeral, when the mourners indulge in the habit of embracing and mauling the corpse. If after such demonstrations—which are in fact inspired by affection—the mourner eats with unwashed hands, or goes to sleep with his hands under his ear for a pillow, he is likely to be entered by the *sovai* and laid up with a sickness. There are many ways—some of them very vaguely conceived—in which the *sovai* may inflict the living with sickness. We hear, for instance, of a man with a swollen jaw who had been 'struck on the mouth' by a *sovai*; another merely ate food which had been cooked over the same fire as the flesh of a *sovai* animal; but in most cases sickness is due to eating the *sovai* in animal or reptile form.

It has been explained that the spirit of the dead may

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assume such a form, viz. that of some creature of the forest or stream (*vide* pp. 269, 272), so that whoever eats snake, cuscus, lizard, and so forth—even bush-pig—does so at a certain risk. The creature may be an ordinary specimen of its kind, or it may be a *sovai*. In the latter event the man who eats it is in all probability stricken down with illness. The exponents of the *Baigona*, or 'snake cult', which had a vogue in the Northern Division some fifteen years ago, made great play with this belief in animal reincarnation. Not only snakes but a great variety of animals and reptiles were held sacred, and fundamentally their sacred character was due to the fact that they were reincarnations of the dead. Any one, therefore, who killed and ate, or even offended one of these creatures, e.g. by neglecting to hail it respectfully, would incur the anger of the *sovai* which it embodied, and fall sick in consequence. Such cases constituted the peculiar province of the *Baigona* healers, who professed to be able to entice the *sovai* out of the sufferer's body. It is not altogether remarkable that although the *Baigona* was practically stamped out as a cult more than ten years ago there should still be practitioners (some of them actually retaining the title of *Baigona*-men) who continue to make use of methods and theories which are so firmly founded on old belief.

Sorcery Diseases.

From diseases caused by malevolent *sovai* we may turn to the last category, viz. that of diseases caused by sorcery.

It cannot be said that there is anything essentially distinctive in the symptoms of sorcery disease, though one may go so far as to say that it is the more mysterious and inexplicable of symptoms which call for this interpretation; and while it is true that when a native's anger or suspicion is aroused he is liable to strike out with a charge of sorcery for even the most trivial affliction, it remains the general rule to impute this cause only for the more serious complaints. Further than this, it is imputed as cause especially for those complaints which cannot be cured. Thus when a doctor has tried his methods on a patient without success he is likely to set the case down as a hopeless one of sorcery

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and discontinue his treatment; and, indeed, if he be astute enough, he may decide to have no truck with any case that seems too far gone. For it is generally held that sorcery sickness cannot be cured by the ordinary methods of the healer. Failing other explanations, therefore, he adopts this most pessimistic one. Sorcery is, in fact, the native's exegetical last card.

It is not my intention to deal with the methods of the sorcerer further than to say that (*a*) they follow the characteristic procedure in which some symbol of the victim is subjected to a treatment representing in symbolic form the sickness which it is hoped may afflict him; and that (*b*) this process is thought to be made infallible, i.e. the hoped-for result of it inevitable, by the addition of some element of a supernatural character which is known only to the sorcerer. Examples of their methods have been supplied in the essay on Orokaiva Magic, to which the reader is referred. At any rate they need not enter into the subject of the present chapter; for what concerns us here is not the actual practice of black magic, but that entirely disproportionate belief in its practice which has so often supplied a diagnosis of disease.

Common-sense Treatments

We may now turn our attention to native methods of treating disease. These may be considered under three heads: (i) Common-sense, (ii) Expulsive, and (iii) Placatory (which, by the way, are not meant to correspond with the three heads under which were classified the causes of disease).

To the first division there belong a number of treatments which, whatever their degree of futility, seem nevertheless to be straightforward and 'common-sense'. Wounds, for instance, are washed and subjected to a treatment of hot air, blown through a tube of heated bark or banana stalk. After that they may be given a hot compress of leaves. For snake-bite the treatment, I am told, is to cut about the bite and let the blood flow. For headache there is the old remedy of blood-letting from the forehead (by means of a series of small cuts).

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754 case was due to some one's sorcery, and to acknowledge that he was incompetent to deal with it.

Such being the common attitude, we do not find any one attempting to make counter-magic. The only acknowledged method is to go to the imputed sorcerer and ask him to relent; and even this last resort is a matter of theory rather than of practice. For there is first of all the difficulty of discovering the sorcerer, and then there is the practical certainty that the accused man will deny the charge. Were he from any motive to acknowledge it, he would *ipso facto* assume the power of restoring his victim to health; for it is only necessary for the sorcerer to undo his work, to cease subjecting the symbol of the victim to its symbolic suffering (whatever form either of these may take), and the patient will recover. Assuming this power the sorcerer may accept a bribe and consent to neutralize his magic. But if the man succumbs, the acknowledged sorcerer lays himself open to revenge. On the whole I am prepared to believe that the man who is accused of sorcery usually hastens quite truthfully to deny it. And further, I am prepared to believe, despite perfectly authentic instances, that charges of sorcery and requests to relent are not made very frequently before the patient dies. A sick man, or one of his friends, may discover the guilty party in a dream, or may draw his own conclusions from a grudge, but as a rule the patient dies first and then, when it is too late, his relatives may place the guilt and begin to think of revenge. While, therefore, the only remedy for sorcery sickness is to placate the sorcerer, it seems that this treatment is one of theory rather than of practice. Sorcery is the stock explanation of a hopeless case, or of a death, and it is always ready for the baffled doctor to save his face, and for the aggrieved relatives to give them grounds for a revenge.

753 In conclusion, I may shortly reconsider the native's ideas of disease in relation to his general philosophy. That philosophy, as we have seen, is only fragmentary. Much is taken for granted. Ordinary phenomena, things that are 'going well', simply explain themselves; but whatever is extraordinary, particularly what is unfortunate, puzzles and an-

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noys and calls for explanation. Just as the wonderful may remind a Christian of his God, or calamity jog the most forgetful worshipper into remembering his prayers, so will extraordinary or unfortunate happenings rouse the *insouciant* native to summon up his own ideas of what is occult or supernatural. He has two funds to draw upon for explanation: they are essentially distinct and more or less alternative, for he sometimes uses the one and sometimes the other, viz. (1) the *sovai*, and (2) the living magician. Exactly how these two kinds of forces operate remains, as we should expect, unformulated. The power of the *sovai* is intrinsic, that of the magician commonly rests upon the use of some secret, usually a 'medicine' or specific; but it is enough, I imagine, for the native to believe that each of them possesses a mysterious power, without trying to define that power or track it to a further source.

Disease, illness, accident—all bodily ailments—being in more or less degree both mysterious and troublesome, admit of either of these explanations. But ailments of the commonest kind, and those which entail no great suffering, are likely to be accepted without further investigation or conjecture as to their cause; they are 'all in a day's work' in fact; part of nature itself; normal incidents in the life of the body. It is only the more inexplicable and the more serious complaints that call for explanation, in that they appear as interruptions in the routine of nature, in the course of well-being. Then the native feels he must put the blame on something or somebody, and there are ready to hand those two agencies whom he has credited with a not-understood power for good and evil, the *sovai* and the living magician.

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probably much more often—the effect which he attributes to his medicine, i.e. the *jipari*, is due to a complex of excitement, bad example, and betel-nut.

As certain medicines are prescribed for the Taro man either to increase his own power or else to be transmitted by him to the taro itself, so on the other hand there are many restrictions placed upon him for negative, but similar, reasons. He is in fact dieted with some strictness, and the reasons which govern these food taboos are worth considering. In a great majority of cases the man who observes the taboo is completely ignorant of any logical basis for it: he has learnt it by rote, so to speak, having received it as part of the cult from his instructor, and not only has he never heard a sensible argument in its favour, but, if taxed for such an argument, can think of none save *ad verecundiam*. But sometimes one meets a native with a spark of imagination. The explanations which he may give of the taboos are not necessarily the original ones, but notwithstanding they are typical native explanations, and at least as good as the original. A few examples will show what real grounds there are for the prohibitions. *Pauri*, the cuscus, is forbidden because of the yellowish colour of its fur, dappled with brown spots. Should the Taro man eat *Pauri* it is likely that the taro leaf will develop similar properties instead of keeping the rich green colour which is indicative of health. *Auja*, the red pandanus seed, and *sasaru*, a kind of frog, are tabooed for the same reason. It was explained that the frog, when cooked, is of a yellow-brown colour which is unwholesome not so much for the Taro man as for the taro. *Ambe*, or sago, was avoided in some quarters because the roots at the butt of the palm are often exposed in a way that is not desirable for the taro tuber. *Imbaga* the crocodile, *wotomo* a kind of flat fish, and *ohiti* the eel were 'too heavy'. The idea of weight seems to be associated very commonly with sickness, and it is felt that the Taro man who ate creatures in which this quality is so obviously embodied, would be endangering his power of healing.

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powers of healing. There are many more food taboos. Some of them may well enough be survivals from the *Baigona* cult (which placed a prohibition upon almost all creeping things), as they appear to have no very obvious bearing on Taro. Certain kinds of the taro itself were held to be injurious—only so, indeed, since the institution of the cult, for previously these forbidden varieties were eaten without any untoward result; Mr. Elder says they were given to his mission boys, 'who being unbelievers thrived on them'.

The taboo upon bathing has already been mentioned. It was evidently observed with a certain strictness and, in some cases at least, a breach of the taboo meant more than the mere loss of power. One Taro man of importance gave the following explanation for a lameness in the knee which had crippled him for eight months. Having used his spear too effectively in a village fight he was removed to jail, and there, under a regimen which took no heed of his priestly obligations, compelled to cut his hair and wash the smears of mud and white ochre off his body. The unfortunate prisoner's explanation still leaves one mystified: the dirt, mud, and paint being washed off the remainder of his body, concentrated in his knee and there brought on his lameness.

One important business of the Taro man's, viz. that of curing, will receive a fuller treatment in section 9, and is mentioned here only because it has to be included in a general list of Taro activities. A few additional matters of minor interest, however, may be referred to at this stage. One is the custom of hand-shaking. I am assured that the hand-grip was known as a form of greeting long before the advent of the new cult; but now it has become a rage. When a Taro man comes upon a number of men engaged in conversation and sitting, after their fashion, in a haphazard group on the ground, he will go from one to another and take the hand of each in turn. As a rule the hand-clasp is somewhat limp and unresponsive, though on occasion one may see two

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eminence. When a man is credited with supernormal powers in any department of life, he becomes an object at once of admiration and suspicion; and he would be more of a fool than he is if he did not make full and varied use of this imputed supernormality. Consequently, if a man by virtue of spiritual possession can prosper the taro, he can cure the sick and control the weather by the same means; and, it is to be feared, he can turn his gift of *mana* to account in other and less amiable directions.

In respect of medical treatment the Taro cult has brought with it a few innovations, though these have by no means displaced the older methods. The Taro man makes free use of old and new. There are, however, in native belief several distinct sources of infirmity, according to which all ailments may be roughly classified. There is, first, the mild epidemic (*yevi* or *bauni*) which is regarded as a phenomenon of nature, brought by the cold wind, and which usually evinces itself in a headache and a fever. There is, secondly, a large class of ailments due to the evil influence of spirits of the dead; these are commonly attended by internal pains. Thirdly, there are those illnesses caused by sorcery (*kai*, *inja*, *saruka*), which have a variety of more or less severe symptoms. Now the illnesses of this last category are in a sense incurable: there is only one recognized way of curing the victim of sorcery, and that is for the sorcerer himself to withdraw or annul his evil influence. A Taro man will not treat a case of sorcery-sickness: he acknowledges that he can do nothing for it, and he has a means of diagnosis which is as simple as it is infallible. He tries his treatments: if they are not successful, and the patient is obviously dying or already dead, he says, 'I am sorry, I can do nothing: this is a case of sorcery-sickness.'

As for the first category, those of the natural ailments, it appears that the Taro man will treat them with confidence, though they are said not to be fatal, and may be expected if left alone to cure themselves. It is with the

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second category, viz. those caused by the spirits, that the Taro doctor is best qualified to deal. That the spirits of the dead may afflict their surviving friends with illness is an old Orokaiva doctrine; that the spirits of the taro can do the same is presumably a new doctrine, associated only with the new cult.

The native goes in real fear of his dead relatives and in perpetual anxiety lest he should offend them and incur their displeasure. This is probably the reason why a dead man's garden is taboo to his relatives: they fear he may infect the products of it out of sheer malice. If a man ate a banana which a *binei* had touched he would fall ill; so also if he ate one of the *binei* animals, i.e. one on which the dead was reincarnated; or, indeed, if he merely neglected the offerings and the observances which are due to the dead.

In the doctrines of the new cult it was maintained that a man might give offence to the actual taro spirit, and be punished by it with a sickness. Thus there were certain varieties of taro, perfectly wholesome, which were made taboo to the layman of the new cult. They were called *koropa*, or strong, and he ate them at the risk of illness. So again, according to Buninia and Yaviripa, taro might not be pulled without first consulting the Taro men. The taro spirits would be angry with one who was so disrespectful as to break this rule, and would enter into him and lay him up with a sickness.

It is not fair to pester a native for definite explanations of abstrusities. The dead or the taro may *influence* for evil the rash or irreverent, and this influence is felt to be a kind of spiritual possession. Just as the taro spirit may, in the accredited Taro man, be a fund of power, so in the layman who has rashly or ignorantly offended, it may be a source of sickness. We can only say that the native's conception of spiritual possession is not less hazy than our own.

The methods of the doctor are in the main directed towards freeing the patient from the evil influence. The

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754 ment. Sorcery and magic, indeed, are often regarded as something a little beyond the ken of the matter-of-fact white man.

754 Among the natives themselves, however, there is a
753 rife impression that disease, illness, death, and everyday misfortunes are due to black magic. Although it would be seriously incorrect to say that misfortunes are invariably ascribed to black magic, the impression may nevertheless be very far-reaching. Typically, however, it is confined to those mishaps and illnesses of a more mysterious and inexplicable nature. An accident, a fall from a tree, anything so straight-forward and palpable is likely to pass without comment; so is the death of an old man: as they say picturesquely, *Iji ambu*, 'His sun is set', or 'His day is done'. But if a man be cut off in his prime, if he develop some mysterious complaint, if he break out in boils, or if he fall victim to elephantiasis, there is likely to be more than a suspicion of foul play.

It is sometimes averred of primitive people that they believe every death to be due to sorcery. It is desirable in passing to discuss how far this generalization is really true. It may well be true of some primitive peoples while it is untrue of others; for it is certain that the belief in sorcery varies among different societies. But it is not permissible to make the generalization sweep in the whole of Papua. An examination of the theories as to disease, sickness, and death among the Orokaiva reveals, generally speaking, three putative sources. First there are wind and weather. Natives are naturally susceptible to cold and feel keenly the discomfort of it. Colds, fever (presumably malarial), and mild epidemics are commonly endured without inquiry as to their origin, or else are said to come 'on the wind'—which is maybe not so far from the truth. If a man work too hard in the burning sun he may have headache and a fever. Such complaints are regarded as virtually natural. There is a second category of causes, which may account for mild visitations like those described above, but also for

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more serious and often fatal illnesses. These are inflicted by the malignant spirits of the dead. Lastly, there is the category of illnesses brought about by the living sorcerer, which must prove fatal unless the sorcerer himself remove their cause.

The late W. N. Beaver wrote that 'the veriest tyro in Papua will pronounce that no native is ever believed to die naturally'.[1] Even if one include the second of the above categories among the causes of death which are in native belief not natural, Mr. Beaver's generalization would still, I think, be an over-statement. At any rate it would be an over-statement to say that 'when a death occurs every one thinks it was due to sorcery'. The truth is more nearly represented thus: 'when a death occurs there is always some one who thinks it was due to sorcery.' The majority of those who are not closely affected by a man's death simply accept the fact without question. They do not believe that a sorcerer has robbed him of immortality. He died as every man has got to die. But with the friends and relatives of the deceased the case may be different. The grief of bereavement is likely to turn into anger against things in general, and this comprehensive anger is likely to be focused upon the object of some previous enmity, one against whom the bereaved or the deceased may have had a standing grudge. The suspicion of foul play easily springs into the mind of one who is ill used by fortune. He casts about for some one to blame, and fixes upon his enemy. Evidently he did not do the mischief openly; therefore he must have done it covertly. He was in fact the guilty sorcerer. Even some trifling misfortune may be enough to arouse the suspicion of black magic. A man setting out on a long journey is overtaken by bad weather and has to build himself a bush shelter and wait for the rain to cease. No doubt he has time to brood over the annoyance, for he arrives at the conclusion that the untimely downpour has been brought about by one of his neighbours who

[1] *Papua Ann. Report*, 1914-15, p. 50.

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bears him a personal grudge and merely wishes to vent his spite.

It is not always an enemy who receives the blame. Any piece of circumstantial evidence may be sufficient to implicate the innocent, and especially so if he be an old man; for there is apparently a kind of *mana* about old age which argues a special fitness for sorcery. To sum up, one may say that, while it is not true that misfortune, sickness, and death are invariably ascribed to sorcery, the suspicion of it is nevertheless extremely common; and one might go so far as to say that almost every death is ascribed to sorcery in the opinion of some one or other.

An example will show how baseless the suspicion may be. In the village of Aurida on the Opi was to be seen a miniature house, not much larger than that which commonly accommodates a pet cockatoo or hornbill. It contained as perpetual inmate a little girl whose limbs were so twisted as to be quite useless. Some years back, as she said herself, she used to play with the other children until this disease overtook her and slowly turned her into a cripple. As a very little child she had been the great pet of her old *nobo*, or maternal uncle, who had been in the habit of dandling her in his lap. The old man had died before I heard of this case. He had never hinted at making magic against the child, and maybe he was never openly accused of doing so, but there was no doubt in the village that he had been the cause of the terrible malady which eventually ended in her death. No real reason could be found, but the fact that she was so often in his arms was enough cause for suspicion which in time turned to certainty.

The same village provided a somewhat amusing incident which serves to show the ramifications of evil which may arise from a false accusation. One Josiva of a neighbouring village brought a charge of sorcery against an old man of Aurida. He evidently wished to make a court case of it, for he enlisted the aid of three village con-